in each village of the country. As Panchayats are also a village, these will also be covered by a VPT. STD facility on VPT can be provided if there is a demand and it is technically feasible.

(b) No Sir. Most of the telephones are functioning properly. However telephone lines on physical overhead alignment do get affected particularly in area which are prone to snow fall and rain. Telephone service in village Bara, Patti, Edwal, Syun, Distt. Pauri Garhwal got affected due to Snow fall since 19.1.97.

(c) (i) Overhead alignment is being reduced by laying underground cables.

(ii) Work for laying optical fibre cable and work for UHF links are in progress to give long distance connectivity to distant places.

(iii) 16 VSAT Terminals have been installed and 52 more Terminals have been planned to be completed by March, 1999 in the country.

(iv) Repair work of villages mentioned in (a) above is in progress and is expected to be completed by the month end.

Providing telephone connections in Gazrajbigha village in Nalanda district

424. SHRI RAJ NATH SINGH: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a number of persons of Gazrajbigha village are waiting for telephone connections;

(b) whether the above village falls within the radial distance of 5 kms. from the Nalanda Telephone Exchange;

(c) if so, the details of the survey done; and if not, in what way Government propose to provide telephone connections in the village;

(d) whether Government propose to provide long distance connections to the registrants; and

(e) if so, the steps taken/proposed to be taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA): (a) No, Sir, only one applicant Shri Raj Kishore Singh is on waiting list from Gazraj Bigha village.

(b) No Sir, village Gazraj Bigha does not fall with in radial distance of 5 KMs of Nalanda Telephone Exchange.

(c) Village Gazraj Bigha falls, under the local area of Dumrawan telephone Exchange and a telephone connection to the applicant is to be provided from Dumarawan Telephone Exchange;

(d) and (e) Does not arise in view of (c) above.

Setting up of telephone Exchange

425. SHRI IQBAL SINGH: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) the number and details of telephone exchanges of various types which have been commissioned in the country particularly in Punjab and U.P. during 1995-96 and 1996-97; and

(b) the details of such telephone exchanges to be commissioned during 1997-98?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA): (a) Details are given in the statement *(See below)*.

(b) Annual commissioning programme for the year 1997-98 has not yet been finalised.